

Toward a framework for the new International Model Forest Network



The International Model Forest Network

TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR THE NEW INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOREST NETWORK

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Preface

The first two phases of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) initiative were primarily Canadian. Phase III considers its full internationalization. *Toward a Framework for the New International Model Forest Network* is a report based on interviews with international experts, IMFN partners, and the IMFN Consultative Committee. It discusses the applicability to IMFN of lessons learned, looks at challenges and opportunities, and examines future options for IMFN. Central to the discussion is a vision for the Network shared by its international partners.

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In preparing this report, the consultants surveyed experts in international networks, Canadian participants in the IMFN and key international partners (a list of individual consultations is appended). Initial findings were presented to, and endorsed by, the International Consultative Committee in Halifax in September 1999.

1 IMFN: Progress and Promise

Model Forests: A Canadian Concept

A model forest is a working scale forest reflecting the full range of resource values in its geographic area and where the most appropriate sustainable forest management practices are developed, tested, and shared, in a partnership with local communities.

Model Forests

Model forests are about people.....including how people use forests and forest resources and communities that depend on the forest for their livelihood.....they include forests, conservation areas and parks and non-forested areas....

Model forests are about community-based partnerships...including local industries, environmental groups, community associations, indigenous peoples, landowners, and governments.....

A model forest is a process...in which the partnerships collectively make decisions....

Model forests are about networking....in which the partnerships share their knowledge, transfer technology, experiment, and collectively find new approaches....networking occurs at all levels including within the model forest, within a given country, and globally.

Model forests are about economic and environmental sustainability in the use of forests and natural resources.

The model forest concept emerged in Canada in the early 1990s as a direct result of the concern expressed by Canadians about forestry practices and the preservation of the natural environment. This concern echoed the rising global call for what the 1987 Bruntland Commission termed "sustainable development": meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. In 1991, a network of 10 model forest was announced by Canada.

Model forests were seen as a way to find local solutions to global challenges that could be replicated in other settings, and pull together and apply the knowledge, perspectives and resources of all the forest stakeholders in a given community. They were seen as living laboratories where people with a direct interest in the forest, supported by the most up-to-date science and technology as well as funding from the Canadian Forest Service, would participate in decisions about how the forest could be sustainably managed.

The concept proved successful and attractive: model forests contribute to the increase and diffusion of knowledge, they provide a forum where ideas and concerns are

shared and respected, they allow a fair decision-making process, and they provide financial and administrative resources to communities concerned with their forests. Their main strength, however, resides in the sheer goodwill of those who work in them and their determination to make their model forest work and promote sustainable forestry.

At the June 1992 Rio Earth Summit, in conjunction with the launch of Agenda 21, a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development, Canada announced its intention to support the development of an International Model Forest Network Program (IMFN), as part of the model forest experiment.

The International Model Forest Network

The idea of an International Model Forest Network Program was very well received. Funded under Canada's Green Plan and given a term of three years, the IMFN initially invited Mexico, Russia and Malaysia to develop model forests and to link with the Canadian Model Forest Network. The Green Plan funding to Mexico and Russia was matched by local funding. As with the Canadian Network, the purpose of the IMFN was to stimulate the field-level application of new concepts and ideas in sustainable forest management and to create opportunities to share these experiences.

The IMFN is driven by the firm belief that forests can be managed in a sustainable way to safeguard the economic, environmental and social needs of current and future generations. It assumes that an inclusive partnership of all agencies, organisations, communities, and individuals who use the forest resource, each having their own specific understanding and appreciation of it, can create the conditions that will lead to improved and sustainable utilisation of all forest resources. Experience to date, including the rapid growth of the network, supports the fundamental optimism of this endeavour.

In 1995, an IMFN Secretariat (IMFNS) was created that is housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. The creation of the IMFNS marked the beginning of Phase 2 of the Network, Phase 1 being the Canadian Network. The objective of the Secretariat is to foster cooperation and collaboration in advancing management, conservation, and sustainable development of forest resources through a worldwide network of working model forests. It is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) of Natural Resources Canada.

Over five years have passed since efforts began to encourage the international application of the model forest concept. The IMFN experience has been a positive one

for all concerned. A significant degree of momentum has been achieved through growth in the number of model forests and through increasing participation in the IMFN.

More than a Drop in a Bucket...

While each model forest may be small on its own, collectively they are not, indicating that they may well be a springboard to positively influencing sustainable management of forests and natural resources on a scale having significant global impact. For example, in the short time since its inception, the Network now includes 21 model forests around the world, totalling over 12 million hectares, which is approximately equivalent in size to the countries of Nicaragua, Nepal, or Greece. Other model forests are at various developmental stages in Japan, Argentina, Australia, China, Costa Rica, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Existing Model Forests		
Model Forest	Country	Hectares
Foothills Model Forest	Canada	2,750,000
Eastern Ontario Model Forest	Canada	1,530,000
Manitoba Model Forest	Canada	1,050,000
Lake Abitibi Model Forest	Canada	1,100,000
Western Newfoundland	Canada	923,000
Ishikana Sorachi Model Forest	Japan	806,000
Monarch Butterfly Model Forest	Mexico	795,000
Fundy Model Forest	Canada	419,300
Long Beach Model Forest	Canada	400,000
Gassinski Model Forest	Russia	385,000
Calakmul Model Forest	Mexico	380,000
Prince Albert Model Forest	Canada	360,000
Shimanto-qawa Model Forest	Japan	296,000
Waswanapi Cree Model Forest	Canada	209,600
Hayfork Model Forest	USA	203,000
McGregor Model Forest	Canada	181,000
Chiloe Model Forest	Chile	173,000
Applegate Model Forest	USA	115,000
Bas-Saint-Laurent Model Forest	Canada	113,100
Chihuahua Model Forest	Mexico	110,000
Cispus Model Forest	USA	60,000
Total		12,359,000

Support for the IMFN and networking activities have also increased. Japan, USA, Chile, Argentina and Russia have all hosted and/or supported participation in international IMFN workshops and meetings. In addition, country representatives have been participants in IMFN missions supporting model forest development. Current projections indicate that support for IMFN activities and demand for its services will increase in future years.

IMFN is examining how countries collaborate in building community-based partnerships using the model forest concept and how they share their knowledge and experiences through networking. After five years of experience collaborating internationally, the benefits of the model forest concept and its principles continue to be acknowledged and the momentum is strong.

The Promise

Now a proven tool used in seven countries to protect forests and promote sustainable forestry, model forests have an enormous impact on forests around the world and on the people who live in or near them. For model forests are about people: they constitute an effective development tool. Examples of some of these key advantages are:

- Model forests *provide a comprehensive approach* cutting across traditional functional boundaries like agriculture, environmental improvement, water management, forestry, industry, trade, and development
- They *foster inclusiveness* by involving all levels of government but, most importantly, *mobilizing civil society* by empowering communities and individuals at the ground level
- They have proved particularly well suited for *involving aboriginal peoples*
- They *foster sustainability* through education and by providing viable economic alternatives
- They *focus on the good governance of natural and renewable resources* at the local level, and in doing so create strong partnership arrangements between communities, individuals, industry, and government (which are larger and more stable than local initiatives and at times, national policies)
- They are an excellent means of *leveraging relatively small investments* into large collective contributions at the level of individual model forests; for example, small IDA investments can result in an estimated four-fold increase in expenditures and activities
- They show excellent results and promise in the areas of *environmental protection* and sustainable development

- They provide a flexible framework in which *collaborative projects* are undertaken that support adaptive management and policy development
- Model forests *can assist in rural development and with dealing with rural poverty*, particularly in populated forests.

Through their inclusion of aboriginal, rural, and poor people in their partnerships, and their pursuit of consensus in dealing with environmental issues, they open the door for the repair of the social fabric that has been badly damaged, in some cases by commercial exploitation of people and resources. Based on Mexico's experience, for example, model forests are the development tool that is having the most impact and shows the most promise.

The Challenge: From Canadian Initiative to International Partnerships

The model forest initiative has evolved through two phases and is entering a third. Phase I (1990-94), the Canadian Experience saw the growth of ten model forests in Canada. The model forest concept proved so successful that attention soon turned to international applications. During Phase II (1995-1999), the Transitional Phase, Canadian attention focused on expanding model forests and the network in Canada and internationally. Ten international forests and an 11th Canadian one developed as did a strong 12 country international network. International Phase II activities were coordinated by the IMFN Secretariat guided by an all Canadian Interim Steering Committee. Phase III (2000-2004), the Internationalization Phase, will develop a truly international Network led and supported by organizations, countries, and individuals from around the world.

Three Phases of IMFN

Canadian Experience	Phase I	1990-1994
Transition	Phase II	1995-1999
Internationalization	Phase III	2000-2004

From the beginning, the Canadian partners expressed the desire to see the IMFN grow as a vehicle to foster international co-operation. Reality dictated that Canada could not do it alone and that other countries and institutions would be needed as partners if the IMFN were to move from a Canadian initiative to one that was truly international.

Based upon the success of Phase I and II, a third phase of IMFN Development is envisioned for the period April 2000 to March 2005. Canada indicated that it was willing to continue supporting the IMFN and its Secretariat for the last year of Phase II, the Transition Period (that is to March 2000), and to partially fund the projected cost of Phase III. During that period, countries were asked to work with Canada on the design of activities and structures for the IMFN and on mechanisms for the support of the IMFN and its Secretariat. An IMFN Consultative Committee with representatives from interested countries and the FAO was formed in 1999 to deal with these issues and the next steps.

At its September 1999 meeting, the Consultative Committee made some key decisions that will significantly influence the future of IMFN. Most notable was the consensus on the need to create a new governance structure and a program initiative and funding strategy for IMFN as part of the launch of Phase Three. The international consultation participants arrived at a shared vision of the ideal future state of IMFN, and indicated some of the actions that would be needed to reach the goals implicit in the common vision. The IMFN Consultative Committee established an IMFN Task Force to lead the process of developing the strategy for the internationalisation of the IMFN between September 1999 and March 2002. Mr. Juan Carlos Collarte of Chile was unanimously elected as Chair of the IMFN Task Force.

2 International Networks: Lessons For IMFN

The "internationalisation" of the IMFN and the challenges and opportunities that it will present need to be looked at in the context of international networks for scientific and technical collaboration, their evolution and characteristics, and what makes them work.

Emergence of International Development Networks

Since the first UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in 1972, international development donors and national governments have increasingly supported international and regional networks of institutions to carry out research and technical cooperation.

The impetus for this growth has been an increasing misfit between traditional institutional arrangements and emerging scientific questions and development policy needs, combined with the realisation that:

- Most important development problems require multi-disciplinary approaches to research
- Most policy goals require multi-stakeholder involvement in the policy process
- Many research problems require significant levels of funding to support research and development agendas, and donors, whether governmental or private, are forced to pool resources in the wake of rising costs and declining budgets
- Technical collaboration between governments and industry has increased significantly as has the number of public-private partnerships.

Networks vary from informal networks of individuals and their institutions sharing information, to networks sharing centralised research facilities; to formalised networks, where cooperation is focussed on a common project and protocol while the activities are distributed over a number of sites and/or institutions.

What Makes Networks Work?

International network experts consulted identified the following critical attributes for successful networks:

- Clear, problem-oriented goals that can lead to focussed agendas and realistic implementation plans
- A shared need among participants to work together on the initiative, and room for their priorities to evolve
- Strong scientific or technical leadership in the conceptualisation and implementation of the collaborative effort
- Clear benefits to all participants to be gained from collaboration
- Clarity on who does what and the anticipated time frame for the life of the network.

The following benefits, in order of importance, appealed most to stakeholders in the IMFN ideas and international networks:

- Fostering of innovation in concept and practice
- Partnerships between like-minded organisations in different countries
- Cooperation in research
- Technical support provided through networking
- Information sharing
- Collaboration in funding
- International and regional meetings
- Linking international forest policy and field-level implementation
- Secretariat services to the members.

Other benefits include the leveraging of funds created by networks and their high return on investment as broader knowledge makes it possible to make better use of resources. Advantages have been found to starting small, and even to starting in one region where there are greater commonalities, including language (translation costs and the imposition of one language are major headaches for networks). There are also advantages to having all relevant institutions in a country belong to the network, rather than relying on one national focal point, especially in the rapid dissemination of information to all participating groups, and to strengthening the sense of commitment and membership.

Challenges for Networks: Funding and Governance

Beyond the obvious challenge of attracting sufficient funds from donors, the funding challenges faced by networks are mostly in the realm of perceptions. Networks must indeed convince people that they help reduce duplication and that they focus the efforts of different institutions on a common goal, thus creating the critical mass needed to achieve the desired results and making them cost-effective. It takes a concerted effort on the part of networks to help people see that the costs of the coordinating function or secretariat are marginal compared to the economies realised by the various national institutions involved. The trend towards networks and the growing awareness of donors of the benefits of collaborating with one another in funding projects is making the task easier.

Another challenge is to help people realise that constantly chasing after funds or attempting to become self-supporting can end up harming the work and reputation of networks as it prevents them from focussing on their work and objectives. It must be accepted that, while they can gradually assume more of their operating costs, few international networks ever become self-reliant. The best way to promote the activity, and to ensure that staff time is being spent on core objectives, is clearly to ensure that sufficient and cost effective funding is provided. Effective communications, clearly stated needs, and fiscal credibility are therefore essential.

Governance constitutes another challenge for networks: they must create a healthy dynamic and momentum by finding the right balance between control from the centre (or from the donors) and allowing members to take initiatives. This parallels the need for balance between having common protocols, concepts and methods in place, and accepting unique approaches tailored to local situations. Whether the governance is minimal or relatively institutionalised and formal, it is important that it be transparent and that roles and responsibilities are clear to all involved. Regular meetings are useful as they help members agree on a common program and reaffirm the goals and criteria, as well as their own interest and commitment in the Network. Based on the experience of other networks, a small secretariat, staffed with highly-motivated members of partner organisations, is a good way to overcome these challenges.

It will be particularly important for the IMFN to remain committed to the important principle that, regardless of the structure, network participation is open to all, as this constitutes a fundamental principle for model forests and the IMFN so far, along with the commitment to participation, transparency, and access for all Network activities, including decision making.

Coordinating groups and secretariats of networks are very much on the front line, and experience daily the challenges of balancing multiple demands, collaborating with partners and members, delivering a variety of services, and securing funding. Among their numerous activities, the experts consulted emphasised that the most important role for the secretariat of a network is advocacy: the promotion of the Network and its goals. The second most important activity is the day-to-day coordination of Network activities, and the third essential element is the provision of good administration and accountability.

Relevance for IMFN

Important lessons can be learned from the experience of other networks. Clearly, having an innovative and compelling concept is a necessary first step to succeed and all stakeholders believe that IMFN has this. Just as important is promoting and advocating the model forest concept, which should constitute the main role of the IMFN Secretariat. It can be argued that, given the achievements and promises shown by model forests over the last decade, only a lack of funding or a stifling and inadequate governance structure could prevent the Network from thriving.

The IMFN is faced with an additional significant challenge: time. Not only do most major interventions such as model forest take a long time but, by their very nature, forests are also a very long-term endeavour, concrete results often becoming visible only after decades of activity. The IMFN will have to convince potential donors and members that results are being achieved. The main sign of success is the wide applicability of the idea across many cultures and the rapid growth in the number of international model forests over a very short period of time.

Unlike most international networks that are built on coalitions of existing institutions, IMFN does not have an already existing community of institutions to network. The IMFN is simultaneously developing an international network and creating new institutional arrangements and alliances for each model forest. Either task would be a challenge. Trying to combine both activities is a much more challenging goal than that of most networks. Beyond trying to help institutions with different expertise and mandates work together for a common cause, IMFN partners are creating multi-stakeholder management systems for each model forest that comes into the Network.

When IMFN is compared with other international networks, it is clear that it is different. It is better described as an institution-building international network. This not only means that IMFN is a rare breed; it also means that it is more complex than most networks and, as such, faces particular challenges. One challenge is to allow the Network to evolve as new and different model forests are created, without losing sight of the original concept. Another is to develop the IMFN with its multi-level networks in such a way that the benefits of membership accrue to both country representatives and the partners of the model forests themselves. This is further complicated by issues of language, culture, stage of development, and regional needs. As is always the case when new institutions and players are entering an evolving network, there is a particular need for clarity of roles and responsibilities, and transparency of governance. Information sharing among all members at all levels becomes critical.

3 IMFN Today

The interview survey conducted with IMFN Canadian and international partners in 1999 as background for this paper yielded some useful insights on where the IMFN is today and on the perceptions of stakeholders and experts regarding the Network's accomplishments and strengths as well as the challenges and opportunities awaiting it. More than an evaluation of IMFN, the study provides a baseline for looking to the future and for considering how IMFN might get there from here.

Accomplishments and Strengths

Model forest are very marketable to national governments and international donors. The principles of local management and earning money from sustainable forest management are absolute winners. The return on government investment is huge and this needs to be known.

[international partner]

It is clear from the survey that the IMFN is held in high esteem by stakeholders and experts alike. The concept of model forests and the dedicated and competent people who are part of the Network capture the imagination of experts, practitioners and activists alike, and provide high hopes for the future.

When asked what they see as the main benefits of IMFN, stakeholders most often cite the innovative concept that model forests represent. The second most important value that stakeholders derive from IMFN is the sharing of information across the Network, both the information provided by the Secretariat, and that presented at international and regional meetings and workshops. Much less frequently mentioned are the technical support provided through the Network, cooperation in research, and experimentation.

Sometimes seen as the greatest challenge for the Network, its institution-building aspect, is also one of its greatest strengths and accomplishments. The creation of community-based partnerships for sustainable development makes IMFN's programs attractive to a wide range of international development donors beyond those who have a primary interest in forests and forest management. This is underscored by IMFN's relevance to national and international interest in biodiversity, community resource management, and good governance, a relevance that will be a valuable asset for the Network as it attempts to maximise the benefits of the application of the model forest idea.

Another major strength of IMFN is its Canadian experience and sponsorship. The establishment of 11 model forests in Canada and the early use of that experience to establish international model forests in Mexico and Russia through twinning arrangements with Canadian model forests lent credibility to the initiative and provided early successes and international recognition.

Challenges and Opportunities

According to the experts and stakeholders consulted, a major challenge to IMFN is that model forests are difficult to establish. They are based on community-level partnerships that take time to develop between stakeholders who, at least initially, have divergent views and interests, if not outright distrust of each other's motives. Securing the support of the appropriate national, regional and local governments also takes considerable time and effort. In addition, as model forests must be of sufficient size to encompass the full range of forest uses and attributes found in the surrounding geographic region and/or national forest plan, stakeholder partnerships have to be robust enough to cooperatively work together on such a large tract of land. Each international model forest has taken several years of technical support and development effort on the part of participating governments and the IMFN Secretariat to put in place.

Some stakeholders wonder why it is so intensive and long a process to create each model forest and whether something is amiss with the formula. In response to some stakeholders' concern that the criteria for model forests might be too stringent, efforts have been made to develop a more flexible approach to these criteria, but the fruits of these efforts are not clear to all stakeholders. Two issues have been raised with respect to the criteria for model forests: the first is that the model forest approach is very demanding of the capacity of local organisations and communities to manage resources and to work collaboratively. In some countries, especially poorer developing countries, organisational capacity at the local level is said to be too weak to sustain such large-scale collaborative initiatives. The challenge for the IMFN is to examine this issue and see if the approach can be modified in areas where model forest criteria constitute too great a challenge. A second question about the criteria is about the minimum size of the area to be defined as a model forest. Some stakeholders feel that the large geographic areas of the Canadian Model Forests have influenced the requirement that they include large tracts of land and that the definition of model forests needs to be adapted to include much smaller forest areas or another category of associate model forests. This would increase the number of candidate areas and the membership in the Network. The concept has been modified to be more encompassing in this regard and the fact that physical size is no longer a major criteria needs to be communicated clearly.

Stakeholders consulted in the survey also felt that there should be more direct contacts between the model forest management groups themselves. They wanted the IMFN to help them learn first-hand from the experience of other model forest groups and, while the efforts of the Secretariat to disseminate information were mentioned and appreciated, they cannot replace direct contact with others involved in the front line of model forest management.

The role of the IMFN Secretariat was seen as essential to the Network and there was widespread concern among the stakeholders that the Secretariat was stretched too thinly and could not perform all the many tasks needed. Among the needs mentioned specifically in the survey were more technical and capacity building support to model forests, especially in the start-up phase; and better information about results (needed to assess performance and encourage donors) and about the practical aspects of managing model forests (guidelines and manuals on best practices in multi-media formats). These issues will need to be addressed, either by making more resources available to the Secretariat, or by reconfiguring tasks so that the model forests, or national IMFN members, take on the roles of promoting technology transfer, measuring performance, documenting success stories, and providing practical information.

Another challenge mentioned was the need to actively promote the model forest concept and the IMFN more widely, both within Canada and internationally. This means putting more effort into getting information into the hands of leaders, both government and industry, and enlisting some strong champions in all sectors, including the NGOs, to promote the Network. It was also felt that the IMFN could become better known, especially in terms of its unique approach. It needs to position itself *vis a vis* other sustainable forest management initiatives and not get lost in the international lists of acronyms. These expectations clearly require both more resources, and a more strategic use of resources, to target international audiences that may have been largely missed until now.

The exchange of information is the lifeline of networks and, over the past several years, one of the natural pathways used for this has been the Internet — primarily because of the speed and low cost at which electronic data can be transmitted. The website currently managed by the IMFN Secretariat does present information on network activities, but it is not interactive nor updated as frequently as might be expected for an international network. The Internet could play an important part in internal and external communications. However, the lack of technological capacity and skills in developing countries is an important limitation that will need to be taken into consideration.

Most importantly, many stakeholders felt that the IMFN was not international enough in its governance and structure. This is an issue which the Canadian Interim Steering Committee has already begun to address, and will be one of the early priorities for the International Task Force chaired by Mr. Collarte. The present Interim Steering Committee is entirely Canadian, the funding is largely Canadian, and the Secretariat, located in Canada, is largely staffed by Canadians. Indeed, the project is seen, by many of those surveyed for this report, as *owned* by Canada, and because of its wealth, as inhibiting contributions from other countries.

While this Canadian leadership has been seen as a strength in the first five years of the Network, the IMFN has now reached a point when the internationalisation of its governance and coordinating functions is essential to its future. The authentic internationalization of the Network depends on sharing the costs.

4 Future Perspectives For IMFN

Out of stakeholder and expert interviews and an intensive one-day workshop with the International Consultative Committee in Halifax (September 1999) emerged a clearer collective vision of what, ideally, IMFN would look like by 2005 and of the activities, programs and funding strategy for Phase III: 2000-2004.

IMFN in 2005: The Vision

The overall vision for the Network

Underpinning the view of what IMFN will look like in the year 2005 is the deep belief that the application of the model forest idea is urgently needed and is necessary for the good of mankind. Many participants and interviewees described the experiment with model forests as the first successful demonstration of an approach that effectively addresses a wide range of critical environmental, sustainable development, and rural economic development issues that can be applied on a scale large enough to have a positive global impact. Others pointed out, with passion, that if we continue to wait or continue to focus on traditional approaches we won't have any forests to worry about. Therefore, the commitment to model forests as a concrete and practicable tool for addressing global environmental and rural poverty problems is profound.

The Network is seen as an essential tool to advance the model forest idea on a global scale. By 2005, the Network is envisioned to be a dynamic and growing international network with a capacity much larger than its present one that will enable it to meet the growing demand for its services. Focussed on education/training, practical research, and technical assistance designed to support existing model forests and provide advocacy for new ones, these services are at the highest professional level and are available to existing and potential partners on a timely basis. In addition, IMFN continues to operate at the practical level, providing practical demonstrations of sustainable forests, and community and environmental management.

The core concept

A flexible model forest concept is envisioned in 2005, that is adaptable to a broader variety of national/regional differences. However, IMFN retains the attributes, criteria, and guiding principles upon which the concept has been built, including: respect for the independence of participating model forests and for the sovereignty of participating countries; provision of an open forum for debate and decision on the basis of equality and mutual respect; respect for the value of the knowledge of local communities and of indigenous peoples; and attention to the quality of research results shared with members and partners of the Network.

"Looking 25 to 50 years ahead — I see a future where model forests are no longer needed because the concept has been so widely adopted it has become the norm."

IMFN activities and programs facilitate an application of the model forest concept that involves much more than just forests. International, community and economic development, as well as water management, environmental improvement, and good governance, for example, are integral parts of model forest initiatives around the world.

Networking and collaboration

"In forestry, processes are typically top-down — model forests offer uniqueness through a bottom-up process of empowerment for rural communities."

"Every time model forest people from our country come back from IMFN workshops or meetings, they return enriched, full of ideas and enthusiasm. The IMFN is an international support group for people on the cutting edge of sustainable forest management. Networking and exchange of ideas are paramount to our involvement."

It is envisioned that, in 2005, IMFN and the model forests within the Network are involved in a number of beneficial multi-level partnerships and joint ventures. IMFN continues facilitating multi-level networking (exchange of ideas) and partnering at many levels, including international, regional, and model forest to model forest levels.

Positioning IMFN among other Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) initiatives

By 2005, the IMFN is envisioned to be clearly positioned with other sustainable forest management initiatives. Its role and niche are widely understood and the Network actively collaborates with other organisations. This positioning and collaboration contribute to a high level of support/commitment from several key international funding agencies and national governments. IMFN is recognised for excellence in both sustainable development and responsible governance. Model forests are considered as major players for international development assistance to developing countries. Of the 50 active model forests in the IMFN in 2005, more than 25 are in lesser developed countries, with strong links to model forests in developed countries.

The IMFN has identified three factors to focus upon in directing IMFN towards the goals that it has set out in its vision for 2005 and beyond: programs, funding and governance.

Future Program Initiatives and Networking Activities

The first determinant of future direction and funding decisions should be the programs that IMFN plans to carry out, as outlined in the document *A Proposed Framework for Country Participation in the International Model Forest Network* (November 1998):

- ***Model forest development: partnership and capacity-building.*** This will include creating new model forests and providing on-going support and technical assistance to all model forests, as well as building capacity within the model forest partnerships to promote effective program management.
- ***Economic diversification within model forests.*** The provision of sustainable development options based on both wood and non-wood products will be a priority objective for model forests. The program will provide technical assistance to partnerships and foster experience sharing between model forests.
- ***Measuring performance and progress towards sustainability.*** This increased emphasis on measuring progress and results in the next phase of IMFN will include measuring the economic benefits local communities derive from managing the forest as a model forest, and demonstrating the social and ecological advantages. Criteria for sustainability will need to be agreed upon. Local indicators and a self-assessment methodology will need to be developed and adopted by the Network.
- ***Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) tools.*** The development of decision-support tools for local stakeholders and model forest partnerships will be a major effort, in partnership with other SFM programs and international organisations. These tools will range from computer-based support systems to surveys and will require local participation and training, as well as on-going technical support.
- ***Linking rural development programs.*** Demonstrating the better use of resources and providing mechanisms to integrate rural poverty programs that promote sustainable and self-directed rural development.
- ***Special projects and initiatives.*** These will include pilot projects, studies, demonstration and research projects, training programs and other initiatives that are likely to be regional or focussed on specific model forests, usually in collaboration with other organisations.

In addition, a number of networking activities are envisaged for the next five years. They will serve all model forests and provide outreach to other programs and

organisations working in sustainable forest management or, more generally, sustainable development. These include:

- *Education, training and extension*, achieved largely through technology transfer and exchanges within the Network, with an emphasis on trying to make the capacity-building efforts not only widely accessible, but also replicable.
- *Specialised workshops*, often on a regional basis, and targeted to the five program areas and to the improvement of skills in areas such as human resource management, decision-making, information management, and conflict resolution.
- *Network meetings*, possibly on an annual basis, which would allow all country-level and model forest representatives, as well as donors and observers from other organisations, to come together. As well as being the venue for specialised workshops, it would provide an opportunity for governing and technical bodies to report to the membership and for future program priorities to be discussed.
- *Publications and website*, directed at both the Network membership and a broader audience. It would flow from the activities in the five program areas and include reports on best-practices and methodological tools. Newsletter style information for the Network would also be made available. The electronic website and database would strengthen networking and outreach in a cost-effective and timely manner, and would become a key mechanism for communications.

Future Funding Issues and Options

In Phase II of IMFN (1995-1999), funds were provided to support: the start-up and operations of model forests; networking activities, such as workshops and conferences; and Secretariat activities (including salaries, travel, provision of consultants and technical support, meetings, publications, and steering committee).

These funds have been channelled in various ways. Some countries have provided funds directly for the start-up and running of model forests within their own territory. Others have provided financial support for model forests in other countries. To date, funds from foreign donors have generally not come through the Secretariat, with the exception of a significant contribution from the Government of Mexico.

To give the impression that international model forest programs amount to the almost CAN \$10 million of the IMFN Secretariat's Phase II five-year budget would be misleading. These funds have had a considerable leveraging effect when community, local and regional investments are considered. For example, in the case of Chiloe, there has been substantial leveraging of the original cash investment as well as the large scale mobilization of voluntary resources and contributions in kind.

The Canadian sponsors of IMFN have offered to provide up to 40 percent of the estimated costs of networking and coordination for the period 2000-2005 and asked that its international partners fund the remaining 60 percent of the costs. At the same time, the Secretariat was asked to explore how the Network, and in particular the coordination and networking functions of the Secretariat, might be supported. The idea was to determine what funding formulae and mechanisms might help develop a viable financial base for the next phase, with at least 60 percent of the Secretariat costs coming from non-Canadian sources to reflect the international commitment to IMFN.

An exploration of the experience of other networks in funding their Secretariats and networking activities and consultations with IMFN's key partners helped draw a clearer picture of the various options available, as well as identify the most promising approaches. The table below sets out the different types of partnership arrangements found in supporting networks like IMFN. They are essentially of three kinds: financial contributions, scientific and technical support, and supporting networks through their advocacy and contacts.

Examples of Types of Partnership Contributions

Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrestricted cash contributions • In-kind contributions • Financing specific components • Sponsoring specific events/meetings • Funding technical support • Joint venture funds/venture capital
Scientific/ technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing in-house R&D • Providing expertise • Providing scientific/technical advice • Providing training • Collaborating in projects • Sharing facilities/ equipment
Networking partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening doors • Acting as champions for IMFN in key fora • Sharing information, providing early intelligence to IMFN • Supporting IMFN through our formal links to other fora • Supporting IMFN through our informal networks

Experts consulted agreed that, although unrestricted cash contributions are the hardest ones to get, they are extremely important for networks, as they are the foundation on which other types of contributions can be built. As a result, most networks get by with a core of unrestricted cash contributions, which needs to be supplemented with many other types of support. Common among these are in-kind contributions, such as office space and facilities, which are absolutely critical but whose monetary value is sometimes inflated by the contributor.

Moreover, in the experience of many networks, the earmarking of funds by donors often makes it difficult to manage the resulting distortions in the budget. As few networks can remain so "pure", or are sufficiently well-off financially, that they can afford to refuse donor support targeted at a specific program or country, the great challenge is to ensure that donors also pay their fair share of the central costs of networking and information sharing through some service charge or overhead arrangements.

Networks stress the importance of scientific and technical partnerships but also underline that they require some core support to maintain the secretariat or, at least, the central networking and coordination functions. Some donors like to provide support through paying for experts and consultants from their own national institutions. Another avenue for technical and scientific support for the network is the support by donors of training programs for people working on network projects. This can range from formal university and college training to short-term certification courses and individual workshops. Some donors sponsor internship placements and exchanges as part of capacity-building activities.

Even when they do not make any direct cash contributions to the network, partners can provide valuable support by linking the network and its participants to other organisations and fora. They can also provide early intelligence of opportunities for activities and funding, and act as network champions.

The advice of the experts consulted is unanimous: networks are unlikely to succeed if they approach donors for financial support specifically for their secretariat, separate from the network's projects and program activities. Experts recommend building fund-raising around programs and integrating networking and coordination costs into program activities. As the way the network's budget is structured and presented is critical to making this approach work, they recommend including some new activity in the proposal to attract donor interest, and ensuring that the proposal contains some solid information about results and successes to date.

It is interesting that the advice of the experts consulted is similar to the views of international partners in IMFN. Together, they go a long way toward defining a strategy for approaching existing and new partners that is more program-based and potentially attractive to donors than that initially explored by Canada.

Proposed Funding Strategy for Phase III (2000-2005)

The international partners are fully supportive of the idea that the financial base of IMFN should be more international as part of the overall internationalisation of the Network, its governance and programs. The approach they favour is to first internationalise the governance of IMFN so that it is not a Canadian-dominated network and to use a new governance structure as a springboard for seeking financial contributions and partnerships. This will require a phasing-in process over one to two years to get everything in place.

Although some direct international funding for network activities in 2000 is already under discussion with several countries, a number of partners would find it difficult to contribute to the costs of the Secretariat while it is based in a Canadian government agency. As funding by present international partners will likely be insufficient to maintain the current level of networking activities, at least in the next two years, and as the concept of a formula for membership contributions that makes it possible to raise sufficient funds to support the Network seems to be unworkable, an alternative strategy is needed. The international partners gathered their ideas on this score at the 1999 International Consultation in Halifax.

The funding strategy envisioned by international partners consists in developing a package of activities for funding, based on a network that is genuinely rooted in international partnerships, and includes the following points:

- An *international governance structure*, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for members and some formal agreement between members about the vision, goals, programs and operation of the IMFN.
- A *program* that is developed collaboratively by the Network members and includes international, regional and national program activities and linkages.
- A *report on achievements in Phase Two (1995-2000)*, documenting success stories and using some common methodology to measure performance and results and showing how model forests provide economic benefits to communities and others in the local partnerships, while at the same time supporting sustainable forest management.

- A *major initiative* developed and proposed by Network members, supported but not led by the Secretariat, that includes specific country or regional projects which require collaboration for their effective implementation and which can be funded by donors such as the World Bank, Regional Development Banks and international development donors.
- No *separate proposal for funding the Secretariat* but ensuring that the services provided by the Secretariat in administering and coordinating the network are fully costed and included in the program activities. Increasingly, international donors accept these networking costs as legitimate components of projects that benefit from participation in a Network.
- A *special approach to CIDA*, for support, in the context of Canadian and CIDA leadership in IMFN during its first phase, the convergence between IMFN goals and the five pillars of CIDA's assistance program, and Canadian expertise and international recognition in sustainable forest management.
- *Proposals for support and funding to other IDAs* including USAID, IADB, WB, UNDP, GEF, JICA, etc..
- A *continuation and augmentation of IDRC's leadership role*. During Phase III, IDRC should continue to provide a home for IMFN, whether in Canada or abroad. It should also actively support and participate in promoting the IMFN concept and in securing new partners.
- A *determination of how national and regional networks will fit into the structure*, what representation they might have, and what roles they could play.
- A *"de-Canadianisation" of IMFN* since, rightly or wrongly, the initiative is largely seen by potential international partners and donors as a mechanism for advancing Canadian government policy. This may mean locating the Secretariat in another country.

Future Governance Issues and Options

While the core concepts and values upon which it was built will be of the utmost importance in the design and structure of the new internationalised IMFN, future orientations will also be determined by the aspirations of the Network's donors and partners. As pointed out by the experts consulted for this paper, funding and governance are intricately intertwined and final decisions on the structure will have to be made with donors. However, a number of issues will need to be addressed without delay, as the experience of established networks shows that the lack of focus on governance is a major cause of network failure.

One unique feature sets model forests apart from other networks: unlike most networks, IMFN is made up of at least two, and likely three, levels of interest. At the core of the Network are the model forests that involve individuals of both genders and all ethnic backgrounds, communities, different sectors of the economy, and various ministerial and governmental jurisdictions in creative partnerships at the grassroots level, often with initially conflicting interests. This focus on the local level is the essence of a model forest and what makes it appealing and advantageous from a development perspective. The IMFN is a network of individual model forests interacting with one another.

However, on a second level, the IMFN provides broader support for the concept. It gives local model forests the national support they need to succeed and promotes the involvement of researchers and experts, which is another important success factor.

- As the advantages of model forests as an international development tool become better known, and as the IMFN moves into Phase III, a third “governance” level is emerging. This level is made up of International Development Agencies and others who provide funding for the initiative. As suggested further, it may be advisable to establish a two-tier governance structure, including a panel of policy makers and experts to advise on program activities, and a committee of donors who would guide policy.

To be sure, there are many governance issues that must be addressed. As decisions regarding the future governance of the new IMFN can only be made with the new IMFN partners, the most that can be done at this stage is to point out the key issues that need to be considered:

- Activities of the Network
- Requirement for regional sub-networks
- Membership of the new IMFN
- Membership rights and obligations
- Role and composition of the governing body
- Legal status of governing body
- Accountability framework
- Meeting frequency, attendance, costs, etc.
- Advisability of an expert board or technical advisory committee
- Location, role, strategic direction, staffing, etc. of the Secretariat

For a more detailed discussion of governance options for the new IMFN, please refer to Appendix 2.

Conclusion

After five years of experience collaborating internationally, the model forest concept is widely accepted as a practical, locally-based, low-cost, high-leveraged, sustainable development activity that addresses many critical global issues. A solid base has been built on the experience of Canadian model forests and the activities of IMFN and its international partners and strong widespread country support is evident. These factors lead to the conclusion that the external context is right for success.

At this point in its evolution, it is essential that the IMFN sets up the right internal conditions to take advantage of this favourable environment. Not only must programs and activities be thoughtfully designed, but the governance structure of the new internationalised Network must receive careful attention to further guarantee the success of IMFN.

As stressed earlier, the governance structure cannot be fully designed without the input of future donors and members. The present framework should therefore be seen as a starting point for discussion and reflexion. A number of more specific issues will need addressed, not the least of which being the role that should be played by Canada in the "new" Network.

Appendix 1 - List of International Experts and IMFN Partners Interviewed

EXPERTS:

Burbee, Jim	President, McGregor Model Forest
Ehrhardt, Roger,	Director General, Multilateral Branch, CIDA, Ottawa, Canada
Fine, Dr. Jeffrey	Consultant – Former Exec. Director AERC Ottawa, Canada
Glover, Dr. David	Director, Economy and Env. Program for Southeast Asia Singapore
Lapierre, Louis	President of the Fundy MF, K.-C. Irving Chair in Sustainable Development, University of Moncton, Moncton, NB
Loyche-Wilkie, Mette	Forest Resources Div. FAO Rome, Italy
Monnier, Eric	Centre europeen d'expertise en evaluation Paris, France
Sayer, Dr. Jeffrey A.	Director, Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) Bogor, Indonesia
Scott, Bruce	Director Administration, ILRI, Nairobi, Kenya
Tolle, Tim	U.S. Model Forest Field Representative
Voss, Dr. Joachim	Director, Environmental and Natural Resources, IDRC, Ottawa, Canada

CANADIAN PARTNERS

Ballhorn, Richard	Director General, International Environmental Relations Bureau, DFAIT
Beemans, Pierre	Vice President, Corporate Services, IDRC
Brooks, Dr. David	Research Manager, Programs Branch, IDRC
Johnson, Frederick	Executive Director, IMFN Secretariat
Ketcheson, Doug	Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada
Roberts, Ralph	Environment and Natural Resources Division, Policy Branch, CIDA
Welsh, Dr. Dan	Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Bowen, Rex	Resource and Conservation Assessment Council, New South Wales, Australia
Collarte, Juan Carlos	Advisor to Minister of Agriculture, Santiago, Chile
Nagame, Ichiro	Japan Forestry Agency, Tokyo, Japan
Korienko, Alexei	Head, International Cooperation, Federal Forestry Service of Russia Moscow, Russia
Mezainis, Dr. Vladis E.	Deputy Director, International Forestry, US Forest Service Washington, DC, USA

Appendix 2 - Governance Structure For IMFN: Issues and Future Options

Who Will Govern the Network?

Until now, the IMFN has managed its affairs and advanced its program in a rather informal way. Essentially, decision-making is confided to the Interim Steering Committee, composed of the Canadian sponsoring organisations, which oversees the work of the Secretariat and reviews the progress achieved. To date, much of the Interim Steering Committee's time has been spent on the establishment of new Model Forests and general administrative matters. Consultations with the Canadian sponsoring organisations and with the international partners indicated that, in the next phase, two changes are needed: the governance of the Network should be more international and more formal mechanisms must be put in place, with a clearer allocation of roles and responsibilities.

In practice, the degree to which decision-making should be formalised will be contingent upon several factors:

- *The activities of the Network* – What is expected of model forest members and of the Secretariat will very much determine what system of decision-making will work best. If IMFN envisages that its special projects, networking, or even joint activities between some model forests will depend largely on initiatives of individual Model Forests, then the decision-making infrastructure could remain relatively light and informal. The same conclusion would apply if networking essentially took the form of an exchange of information, the convening of workshops, or the exchange of personnel among Model Forests. However, should concerted actions be systematically undertaken in order to meet predetermined objectives, then, there would be a need for more broadly-based and more formal decision-making.
- *The donor group* – If, in the future, there are more Network-wide activities requiring additional funding, in addition to the operations of the Secretariat itself, the support of several (and probably new) donors will be needed. New donors will inevitably influence the IMFN, and may make their support contingent on their views on the governance of IMFN. Under the current model, there is no single body responsible for overseeing all the activities of the Network or its total operational budget, and thus no single decision-making body.

- ***The role of the Secretariat*** – Similarly, if in addition to servicing the immediate needs of the Network participants, the Secretariat is asked to assume a more proactive role on behalf of the IMFN, it will require guidance and instructions from whatever body is made responsible for network policy formulation. If the Secretariat takes on an advocacy role and starts representing the IMFN in international fora, for instance, or if it is asked to engage in revenue-generating activities (consultancies, managing a certification scheme, etc.) in order to become partly self-sustaining, then it must do so within an agreed-upon and formal framework.

There are no set prescriptions for how the IMFN should organise itself; other than that its internal structure must be tailored to its needs. The two most important questions the IMFN must address are: “Who are the designated members of the IMFN?” and “Which is the overarching governing body of the Network?” From these flow a series of more specific questions about the design of the constituent parts of the organisation – its organs.

Membership of IMFN

Interview feedback and consultations indicate that a number of questions about membership need to be resolved.

Who are the members?

The establishment of a new IMFN is an opportunity to revisit the question of who the members of the Network are. The Proposed Framework for IMFN Paper (November 1998) states that *the original objective was one of creating an international network of model forests but experience and practicalities have led to the view that the International Network should be one of ‘national model forest initiatives.’* (our emphasis). In the course of defining the membership of the IMFN, it would be appropriate to clarify how the initiatives differ from individual model forests, and who should represent them. Obviously, individual Model Forests are central to the IMFN’s concept, and any future governance for IMFN needs to consider how model forests, through their partnership groups, are to participate in the international aspects of the Network. It has also been suggested that the national forestry administrations of model forest countries should enjoy member status. The bottom line is that the questions of who the members of the Network are, and who will meet and be represented in the governance structure need resolution and will be of the utmost interest to donors.

Regional/national networks

The system of 11 Canadian model forests is already well-established as a national network, with a Secretariat based in Natural Resources Canada. Other countries and groups of countries are considering the creation of regional/national networks and secretariats. The IMFN must therefore decide how national and regional networks will fit into the organisational structure and what representation they might have.

When is a forest a model forest?

As more model forests are created, or apply to be so designated, the process for determining model forest status needs to become integrated into the Network's new organisational structure.

Should there be different categories of members?

Once the issue of membership is decided, the IMFN will need to decide if there should be other categories of membership to accommodate the different levels in the Network and types of participating organisations. If model forests themselves constitute one category of membership, what about 'model forests under development'? Or what about national forestry administrations? Should they be in a class of their own? How should IMFN interrelate with other forestry networks such as CIFOR, ITTO, etc.?

What are the rights and obligations of Network members?

Membership in an organisation — be it a network or association — implies rights and obligations. IMFN members enjoy the benefits flowing from their participation in network activities. However, there is often too little attention paid to the obligations of network members entering a partnership. Should they pay dues to a central body, such as the Secretariat and, if so, what form should such dues take, and what scale of dues might be arrived at? What is their responsibility for supporting activities as determined by network members?

A General Assembly to Govern IMFN?

The first and most important question is: which body is the supreme governing organ for the Network? Is it a General Assembly of all the members, which elects or appoints a smaller executive body, and to which the executive and Secretariat must report? Or is it a Board or Steering Committee which governs the IMFN and calls meetings of members, but is not governed by them? Generally, networks adopt the model of a General Assembly of Members as the supreme body, because they place great importance on their participating members.

The size of the General Assembly of Members will influence its direct role in relation to approving the program of work and budget, but the General Assembly would normally be expected to approve the mission and strategic plan. Among the questions that will eventually need to be addressed are:

- *What is the role of the General Assembly?* – In terms of program, should it approve the Network's mission and strategic plan (assuming these are needed), and/or the program of work and budget of the network-wide activities and operations (including those of the Secretariat)? In terms of governance, should the General Assembly appoint a smaller decision-making body authorised to meet and take appropriate action between sessions of the General Assembly? More fundamentally, are general meetings of the membership required for the Network's proper governance?
- *Who attends General Assembly meetings?* – In addition to members of the different categories, should other interested parties be invited to attend the meetings? Should donors and representatives of other SFM initiatives, etc. be able to attend as observers?
- *Frequency of meetings?* – Well-functioning networks usually require regular face-to-face meetings of the membership to exchange ideas and experiences and attend to administrative business. Would IMFN need annual meetings of the entire membership or would biennial or triennial gatherings be sufficient? There is an inevitable trade-off between the benefits and costs of broad participation in governance, although, today, these can be mediated by using the Internet to hold electronic meetings.
- *Costs of meetings?* – In order to keep costs to a minimum, would it be advisable to require each model forest in turn to host a General Assembly? Could participants be required to find funding to cover their travel expenses? Should meetings be convened in conjunction with technical workshops or model forest site visits?

A Network Steering Committee or Board?

Whether or not it is decided to formalise the status of the General Assembly of the IMFN membership, a smaller representative body will almost certainly need to be created that is empowered to govern and oversee IMFN activities on an ongoing basis. Several aspects of this directive organ¹ will need to be decided.

¹ The terms Steering Committee, Board, Board of Trustees or Trustees used in the text refer to the small decision-making body. The actual name will be decided by the new IMFN partners.

Composition of the Steering Committee/Board

Several options could be considered in respect of how the Board should be constituted:

- ***Representative Composition*** – Under this scheme, those appointed to the Board are selected as representatives of the entire membership — either by the members themselves or according to some other more top-down procedure. This is the formula adopted by not-for-profit membership associations in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere.
- ***An Expert Board*** – Those responsible for appointing trustees select individuals with expertise in different areas of relevance to the Network; these experts are expected to perform their Board duties in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of the membership or individual model forests. This formula is the one generally adopted for international scientific or research organisations.
- ***A Donor Consortium*** – A governing body composed of donor representatives may be established for an initiative which donors feel should be launched or where large sums of money are being invested in a program. In such cases, there is usually provision for another forum where the ultimate beneficiaries of the initiative have an advisory voice.
- ***Mixed Composition*** – Most often, the composition of Boards seeks to reflect a balance among membership, expert and donor representation. This is the case of numerous not-for-profit organisations.

Subsidiary Bodies

Depending on its composition, the Board may have to be advised by other bodies. There are commonly an advisory group of donors and/or a technical or scientific advisory committee.

- ***Donor Group*** – If the IMFN Steering Committee or Board is largely made up of member representatives or of experts, the organisation might wish to invite its main donors to share their views and receive reports from the Board through a formal or *ad hoc* Donor Group. When both the donor group and Board meet at the same time, this arrangement has the advantage of facilitating exchanges among those who govern the Network and those who fund it.
- ***Technical Advisory Committee*** – Such a body is usually established when, for instance, the Board is essentially representative of the membership or of donors, and would benefit from technical advice as input to its decisions.

Role of the Steering Committee/Board

The relationship between the General Assembly and the Steering Committee/Board needs to be worked out in order to ensure that these two organs operate with the maximum efficiency for the benefit of the entire IMFN. Among the functions that are normally entrusted to a Board of Trustees are the following:

- Approving or recommending to the General Assembly the general orientations of the Network
- Approving or recommending to the General Assembly the Annual Budget and Program of Work
- Overseeing program implementation and management
- Approving or recommending to the General Assembly the main policies
- Selecting the Executive Director.

The functions assigned to the Board should influence its make up. If, for instance, it is envisaged that fund-raising is a major Board responsibility, then one or two well-known 'champions' with track-records in fund-raising should be appointed to it.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat is the IMFN's core operational organ and its leader (the Executive Director) is the linchpin of the entire Network. The Secretariat serves the IMFN as a whole, its governance bodies, as well as the individual model forests. In addition to its central administrative and coordinating functions, it could be responsible for other more substantive activities:

- Advocating for the Network's mission and generally for sustainable forest management
- Organising electronic conferences on themes relevant to the multi-stakeholder approach or the testing of field-level applications of sustainable forest management
- Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on Network-wide activities
- Acting as an information clearinghouse and ensuring that lessons learned by one model forest are shared with the others
- Developing proposals with members for substantive Network-wide projects to be funded by donors.

To the extent that the Secretariat is able to do more than coordination and administrative functions, it may be able to attract support for the funding of its own operations. Additionally, and only after extensive preliminary study, the Secretariat may — within the guidelines laid down by the Board or General Assembly — engage in activities that are likely to bring revenues, such as providing consultancy services to members or implementing a certification system for forest products. However, experience has shown that revenue-generating schemes carried out by not-for-profit or charitable organisations are often illusory and, in the end, are either found to cost more to run than they bring in or detract significantly from the key mission.

Institutional Issues

Sooner or later, as the IMFN puts in place its organisational structure, it may have to consider whether it should be setting itself up in a more formal fashion. This formalisation of the Network, or more probably of the Secretariat, raises two important issues.

Should the International Network, or the Secretariat, set itself up as a legal entity?

The option of establishing the entire Network as a not-for-profit corporation or association would be so complex an operation that we strongly advise that IMFN not go this route. A more practical option is to consider whether the Secretariat should become a separate legal entity. This would be necessary, for instance, if donors so required; or if the Secretariat undertook revenue generating activities, or engaged in contractual arrangements on such a scale that it would have to be able to contract or receive funds in its own name. Another option would be for the Secretariat to remain as it is presently: an administratively separate unit within an existing institution, which, while allowing it a large degree of autonomy, represents it in all its legal and contractual transactions.

Where should the Secretariat be located?

Some international partners indicated that it would be easier for their institutions to contribute to the operations of the Secretariat if it were located in an existing international organisation, such as the FAO, ITTO or CIFOR. The view was also expressed by the experts consulted and Canadian and international partners that, in order for the IMFN and, in particular, its Secretariat, to become more broadly supported, it may be advisable to distance it from its Canadian roots and relocate it elsewhere, possibly in a developing country. Obviously, an appropriate transition period would be necessary before the move to another country took place to minimise disruption to network operations.

These institutional matters — and, in particular, that of transforming the Secretariat into a not-for-profit entity or NGO — are less pressing than the task of clarifying the relationships among, and attributes of, the different IMFN organs: IMFN should first decide who its members are and who governs it.

It will be important, once the International Task Force and main sponsoring organisations have agreed on a set of proposals for the new governance structure of IMFN, that they share these proposals widely with the membership of the Network, including the model forest partners. Whether the proposals are shared for comment only, or for comment and later for approval or adoption, will depend upon the answers to the questions that are set out in this report, especially the decisions about who the members are and what their rights and responsibilities are *vis a vis* the proposed governing bodies.

With these important issues in mind, it is essential to understand that the funding partners will ultimately decide the governance and organisational structure of the re-created IMFN.